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# Legislative Update

from Florida Senator Dave Aronberg, District 27

## Capitol Office

Senate Office Building, Room 220  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

## District Office

3900 Woodlake Blvd.  
Suite 301  
Greenacres, FL 33463

## District Office

2120 Main Street  
Suite 206  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Tallahassee 850.487.5356, fax 850.487.5496

Greenacres 561.433.2627, fax 561.434.3995

Ft. Myers 239.338.2646, fax 239.338.2648

E-Mail [aronberg.dave.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:aronberg.dave.web@flsenate.gov)



## Dave's View

### Finding a Silver Lining in the 2004 Legislative Session

The 2004 Legislative Session has ended, and the reviews are mixed.

One critic of the Republican-controlled Legislature, columnist Howard Troxler of the *St. Petersburg Times*, wrote that the Legislature passed 500 bills this session – and only 15 of them were good.

While Mr. Troxler's estimate is debatable, I am pleased to report that of the 15 "good bills" identified in his analysis, 3 of the 15 (20%) were bills that I sponsored:

- **Senate Bill 284** outlaws the growing abuse of using cell-phone cameras and other high-tech devices to secretly photograph and disseminate images of people who are undressing in gym locker rooms and other places where we have a reasonable expectation of privacy.
- **Senate Bill 2666** fixes a "wicked law" that was snuck through the 2003 Legislature that allows landlords to impose huge fees on tenants who fail to provide 60 days of advance notice that they are moving out after their lease expires.
- **Senate Bill 2682** protects consumers from the abuses within the credit counseling and debt management industry. The bill limits the fees charged to debtors and ensures that these companies comply with state consumer protection laws.

For me, the greatest disappointment from the legislative session was the House of Representatives' refusal to accept the Senate's voucher accountability bill. This was a top priority for me in the Senate, and its failure in the House means that parents still don't know how their children are performing in private schools that receive public vouchers, and taxpayers still don't know where their money is going.

Still, all was not bad in Tallahassee this session. Election years in Tallahassee can be ripe for demagoguery, grandstanding and showboating, yet the Legislature completed its work on time this year without any costly special sessions. And despite a sluggish economy that is only starting to rebound, the Legislature balanced the budget without any tax increases. Unfortunately, the budget again relies on non-recurring (i.e., one-time) dollars revenues to pay for recurring needs, especially in the area of social services.

Indeed, the 2004 Legislative session deserves its mixed reviews. But it could have been worse.